

Claims:

1. Use of an agent having the property of disrupting the binding of p53 and mdm2 or inhibiting the production of mdm2 in a population of cells, in the preparation of a medicament for activating p53, wherein the population of cells do not overexpress mdm2.

2. The ~~use~~ ^{Method} of claim 1 wherein the p53 is activated for DNA specific binding and transcription.

3. The ~~use~~ ^{Method} of claim 1 ~~or claim 2~~ wherein the agent comprises a peptide having an amino acid sequence corresponding to human p53 which has the property of binding to mdm2.

4. The ~~use~~ ^{Method} of claim 3 wherein the peptide is less than 25 amino acids in length and has an amino acid sequence having at least 70% amino acid sequence identity with a corresponding portion of human p53.

5. The ~~use~~ ^{Method} of claim 3 ~~or claim 4~~ wherein the agent includes the peptide motif FxxxW, where x is any amino acid.

6. The ~~use~~ ^{Method} of claim 1 ~~or claim 2~~ wherein the agent has the property of binding to one or more regions of mdm2 involved in binding to p53.

7. The ~~use~~ ^{Method} of claim 6 wherein the agent is an antibody which is capable of blocking a p53 binding site of mdm2.

method

8. The ~~use~~ of claim 1 ~~or claim 2~~ wherein the agent has the property of competing with mdm2 for binding p53, but does not inhibit a biological activity of p53.

Method

9. The ~~use~~ of claim 8 wherein the agent is an antibody capable of blocking a mdm2 binding site of p53.

Method

10. The ~~use~~ of claim 1 ~~or claim 2~~ wherein the agent is an antisense oligonucleotide capable of inhibiting the synthesis of mdm2 in the population of cells.

Method of Claim 1

11. The ~~use of any one of the preceding claims~~ wherein the medicament is for the treatment of cancer, a viral condition or other condition associated with non functional p53 or mdm2.

12. A method of activating p53 comprising exposing a population of cells to an agent having the property of disrupting the binding of p53 and mdm2 or inhibiting the production of mdm2 so that p53 in the cells is activated, wherein the cells do not overexpress mdm2.

13. The method of claim 12 wherein the p53 is activated for DNA specific binding and transcription.

14. The method of claim 12 ~~or claim 13~~ wherein the agent comprises a peptide having an amino acid sequence corresponding to human p53 which has the property of binding to mdm2.

15. The method of claim 12 ~~or claim 13~~ wherein the

peptide is less than 25 amino acids in length and has an amino acid sequence having at least 70% amino acid sequence identity with a corresponding portion of human p53.

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16. The method of ~~any one of claims 12 to 15~~ wherein the agent includes the peptide motif FxxxW, where x is any amino acid.

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17. The method of claim 12 ~~or claim 13~~ wherein the agent has the property of binding to one or more regions of mdm2 involved in binding to p53.

15 18. The method of claim 17 wherein the agent is an antibody which is capable of blocking a p53 binding site of mdm2.

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20 19. The method of claim 12 ~~or claim 13~~ wherein the agent has the property of competing with mdm2 for binding p53,

but does not inhibit a biological activity of p53.

25 20. The method of claim 19 wherein the agent is an antibody capable of blocking a mdm2 binding site of p53.

21. The method of claim 12 ~~or claim 13~~ wherein the agent is an antisense oligonucleotide capable of inhibiting the synthesis of mdm2 in the population of cells.

30 22. A method of screening test substances for the property of disrupting the binding of p53 and mdm2 or inhibiting the production of mdm2, the method comprising

employing cells which do not overexpress mdm2, the cells being transfected with a reporter construct comprising nucleic acid encoding a reporter polypeptide under the control of promoter elements that respond to the level of 5 p53 activated for DNA specific binding to direct expression of the reporter polypeptide, the method comprising exposing the cells to the candidate substances and detecting the presence of the reporter polypeptide.

10 23. The method of claim 22 wherein test substances are peptides and the cells are transfected with an expression vector comprising nucleic acid encoding the peptides so that the peptide is expressed in the cells.

15 24. The method of claim 22 ~~or claim 23~~ wherein the test substances are expressed as fusion with a peptide capable of displaying the test peptide in a particular conformation.

20 25. The method of claim 24 wherein the peptides are expressed as fusion with thioredoxin.

26. The method of claim 22 wherein the test substances are microinjected into the cells

25 27. The method of claim 22 wherein the test substances are coupled to transport molecules so that test substances are transported into the cells.